REMARKS

Applicant thanks the Examiner for recognizing that claims 7 and 9 include allowable subject matter.

The remaining claims (1-6, 8, 10 and 11) were rejected as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,817,740 (Kobayashi et al.). As discussed below, applicant respectfully requests reconsideration.

Claim 1 has been amended to clarify that the light distribution of the head lamp is controlled "so as to illuminate an area ahead of the vehicle about as far as a location which is determined to be the terminal end of the road." The Office action appears to have ignored the claimed function of the "light distribution control means."

The Kobayashi et al. patent discloses performing light distribution control according to the more reliable of (i) information derived from map information acquiring means, and (ii) information detected by environmental condition detection means. Various information may be obtained from an imaging unit such as the distance to an intersection or curved road, as well as the presence of an oncoming vehicle (col. 5, lines 5 and 13-15).

The Kobayashi et al. patent also discloses various ways in which the light distribution of the head lamp may be varied. For example, if it determined that the road is straight, then the vertical direction of the head lamp may be controlled so that a "far visual field" is secured (col. 20, lines 28-44).

However, there is no specific disclosure of suggestion in the Kobayashi et al. patent of illuminating a location that is determined to be the terminal end of the road. Indeed, there is not even a disclosure or suggestion of identifying the terminal end of the road.

In some implementations, the present invention may provide various advantages not disclosed or suggested by the Kobayashi et al. patent. For example, if a vehicle is traveling uphill and the vehicle's head lamps illuminate ahead of the vehicle into the "far visual field," there is an increased risk of glare to the driver of an oncoming vehicle. In contrast, by detecting

the terminal end of the road based on a captured image and illuminating only as far as the area determined to be the terminal end of the road, the risk of glare to the driver of the oncoming vehicle may be reduced.

The other claims depend, directly or indirectly, from claim 1, and should be allowable at least for the same reasons.

It is believed that all of the pending claims have been addressed. However, the absence of a reply to a specific rejection, issue or comment does not signify agreement with or concession of that rejection, issue or comment. In addition, because the arguments made above may not be exhaustive, there may be reasons for patentability of any or all pending claims (or other claims) that have not been expressed. Finally, nothing in this paper should be construed as an intent to concede any issue with regard to any claim, except as specifically stated in this paper, and the amendment of any claim does not necessarily signify concession of unpatentability of the claim prior to its amendment.

Please apply any charges or credits to deposit account 06-1050.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: 2/23/2005

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